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House of Representatives

Statement of Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin

On the

**AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAQ RESOLUTION OF
2002 -- (House of Representatives - October 08, 2002)**

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Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this resolution to authorize the President of the United States to go to war with Iraq in a unilateral first strike.

It is clear that Saddam Hussein has been and continues to be a threat to Iraq's neighbors and to all peace-loving nations. The United States and the United Nations have recognized the dangers posed by his pursuit of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The very existence of these types of weapons in our world is exceedingly dangerous. They are dangerous in the hands of a dictator like Saddam Hussein, but they are also dangerous stockpiled in the former Soviet Union. They are dangerous even in our own stockpiles. Control and destruction of weapons of mass destruction are essential to our national security and to world security.

The world has wisely taken action to proactively address this threat, and I am proud that the United States has been a leader in addressing the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Right now, the United States is spending \$1 billion per year to prevent the proliferation of these weapons, but we must do more.

The question before the world today and the Congress of the United States is, what steps do we take to ensure that Iraq does not use weapons of mass destruction? The President has indicated a willingness to work together with the United Nations to renew international inspections and the disarmament process. We must let this process begin, and we must do everything we can to ensure that it succeeds.

In the absence of an imminent threat to the United States, in which case the President, as Commander-in-Chief, already has the legal authority to respond, but in the absence of an imminent threat, working with our allies and other nations to address this threat is the appropriate way to proceed.

The administration's skepticism about Iraq's agreement to allow weapons inspectors without conditions is understandable. However, we must allow weapons inspections a chance to proceed before concluding that they have failed. The world community is with us in demanding inspections and disarmament. Establishing an inspection process that is complete, thorough and

comprehensive can be done, but it will require resources and it will require our determination and it will require the active cooperation of our allies and the world community.

War against Iraq should not be our first choice but rather our very, very last resort. The United States has many tools, I mean many tools, to address the threats of weapons of mass destruction. Absent an imminent threat, we must exhaust our other tools before hauling out the machinery of death and destruction, and there are alternatives between doing nothing and declaring war.

It is our responsibility to address the threat to the safety of Americans and our allies from Iraq. Nothing is of greater concern to a Member of Congress than the health and safety of our citizens. A military first strike on Iraq, absent the support of the international community, may be more dangerous to our citizens than using means short of war. War against Iraq could further destabilize the Middle East. War against Iraq could make it more likely that weapons of mass destruction are used on our civilians. War against Iraq could endanger our allies in the region. War against Iraq could reinforce anti-American extremism and terrorism recruitment. It is absolutely essential to weigh these costs of war, also.

The President's case for war emphasizes the potential threat from Iraq, while minimizing the dangers inherent in military action targeted at a regime change. War is far from risk free. In fact it may be far more dangerous an option to American security.

A rat backed into a corner will fight, not surrender. If Saddam Hussein has no other option, he is more likely to use weapons than under our current containment policy. He could use them against American troops. He could use them against Israel. He could use them against the Kurds in northern Iraq. He may even decide that, with nothing to lose, why not give them the weapons to anti-American terrorists.

Madam Speaker, we should be very aware that Iraq's neighbors are not clamoring for us to attack. They understand the danger of war with Iraq.

An attack on Iraq would likely be perceived by some as an attack on Islam, generating more anti-Americanism and encouraging radical fundamentalism. The precedent set by a go-it-alone first strike would shape the future of this century. Is that how we will approach the nearly 30 other countries that possess or are developing the weapons of mass destruction or the means to deliver them? And how will we speak with any moral authority to other sovereign nations who seek to take things into their own hands against other states they see as threats?

Madam Speaker, issues of war and peace are never easy. The decision we will make will shape our century. I do not know what the future will bring. However, I firmly believe that we must pursue diplomacy and every other tool first. War with Iraq now is not the answer.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose this resolution to authorize the President of the United States to unilaterally go to war with Iraq.

It is clear that Saddam Hussein has been and continues to be a threat to Iraq's neighbors and to all peace-loving nations of the world. The United States and United Nations have recognized the

dangers posed by his pursuit of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The very existence of these types of weapons in our world is exceedingly dangerous. They are dangerous in the hand of a dictator like Saddam Hussein. They are also dangerous stockpiled in the former Soviet Union. And they are dangerous even in our stockpiles. Control and destruction of weapons of mass destruction are essential to our national security and world security.

The world has wisely taken action to proactively address this threat. I am proud that the United States has been a leader in addressing the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Right now the United States is only spending \$1 billion per year to prevent the proliferation of these weapons. We must do more.

The question before the world today and the Congress of the United States is: what steps do we take to ensure that Iraq does not use weapons of mass destruction? The President has indicated a willingness to work together with the United Nations to renew international inspections and the disarmament process. We must let this process begin. And do everything we can to make sure it succeeds.

In the absence of an imminent threat to the United States (in which case the President already has the necessary legal authority as Commander-in-Chief to respond).....in the absence of that imminent threat, working with our allies and other nations to address this threat is the appropriate way to proceed.

The Administration's skepticism about Iraq's agreement to allow weapons inspectors without conditions is understandable. However, we must allow weapons inspection a chance to proceed before concluding they have failed. The world community is with us in demanding inspections and disarmament--we should do all we can to make them effective. Establishing an inspection process that is complete, thorough and comprehensive can be done. It will require resources. It will require determination. And it will require the active cooperation of our allies and the world community.

War against Iraq should not be our first choice, but rather our last resort. The United States has many tools to use to address the threats of weapons of mass destruction. Absent an imminent threat, we must exhaust our other tools before hauling out the machinery of death and destruction. And there are alternatives between doing nothing and declaring war.

The President has articulated his case against Iraq by citing the danger posed by its weapons on mass destruction. He has envisioned a Middle East dominated by a nuclear-armed Iraq, bullying its neighbors, blackmailing the region, threatening the United States, and arming terrorists. I believe the United States and the United Nations should take actions to prevent this nightmare scenario from occurring.

It is our responsibility to address the threat to the safety of Americans and our allies from Iraq. Nothing is of greater concern to a Member of Congress than the health and safety of our citizens. A military first strike attack on Iraq, absent the support of the international community, may be more dangerous to our citizens than means short of war. War against Iraq could further destabilize the Middle East. War against Iraq could make it more likely that weapons of mass

destruction are used on civilians. War against Iraq could endanger our allies in the region, like Israel and Turkey. War against Iraq could reinforce anti-American, extremism and terrorist recruitment. It is absolutely imperative to weigh these costs of war against the threat.

The President's case for war emphasizes the potential threat from Iraq, while minimizing the dangers inherent in military action targeted at a regime change. War is far from risk free. In fact, it may be a far more dangerous option.

A rat backed into a corner will fight, not surrender. If Saddam Hussein has no other option, he is more likely to use these weapons than under our current containment policy. He would use them against American troops. He would use them against Israel. He would use them against the Kurds in northern Iraq. He may decide that with nothing to lose, why not give the weapons to anti-American terrorists.

Madam Speaker, we should be very aware that Iraq's neighbors are not clamoring for us to attack. They understand the danger of war with Iraq.

An attack on Iraq would likely be perceived by some as an attack on Islam, generating more anti-Americanism and encourage radical fundamentalists.

In addition to the military dangers posed by an invasion of Iraq, we must consider the post-war challenges. Rebuilding Iraq will be a major challenge that will take many years and a great deal of money. There is no history of democratic government in Iraq. The Iraqi opposition is disorganized and divided, despite U.S. efforts to pull them together. The economy and infrastructure is in ruins after years of war and sanctions.

If we look at previous wars and occupations that the United States has undertaken, success has meant an extended commitment of time, resources and American forces. We did successfully rebuild Europe and Japan after World War II. It has been an unqualified success. Yet more than fifty years later, we still maintain military forces on their soil and in their defense. Are we prepared to keep 100,000 or more troops in Iraq to maintain stability there? If we don't, will a new regime emerge? If we don't, will Iran become the dominant power in the Middle East? If we don't, will Kurdish separatists declare a new state, destabilizing our NATO ally Turkey? Will Turkey react? If we don't, will Islamic fundamentalists take over Iraq? We cannot know what will happen in a post-war Iraq, but all of the good outcomes clearly require a substantial U.S. commitment, far more than any other in the region, even Afghanistan.

International law is clear in reserving for a sovereign nation the right to self-defense. It is also generally accepted that this right of self-defense extends to a preemptive attack in the case of an imminent threat. Thus, should Iraq pose an imminent threat to the United States, we would be justified in taking preemptive action. The President has not made the case that an imminent threat exists. Instead, he has made a much broader and more troubling argument: that we are unlikely to ever have enough evidence of an imminent attack from Iraq and therefore must act now. The fundamental problem with this line of reasoning is that it blurs the standard of evidence required to justify a preemptive attack under international law, undermining the ability of the world community to maintain peace and security.

The precedent set by a go-it-alone first strike would shape the future of this century. Is that how we will approach the nearly 30 other countries that possess or are developing weapons of mass destruction or the means to deliver them? And how will we speak with any moral authority to other sovereign nations who seek to ``take things into their own hands" against other states they see as threats?

Absent an imminent threat, it is imperative that we build a strong case for taking preemptive action against Iraq. The standard of evidence must be high, not low. The best way to build a convincing case is to work with the world community to build that case. Coercive weapons inspections will help us build that case in two ways. If Saddam Hussein cooperates, even reluctantly, we will know far more about his weapons capability and the threat. We will also be able to disarm him of all that we find. If Saddam Hussein refuses to cooperate, or undermines the work of the inspectors, the world will be more willing to accept a military solution. A coercive inspections effort over the next several months will strengthen our ability to deal with the threat.

The President should be commended for going to the United Nations last month to urge a resumption of the inspections. We should work with our allies and other nations to implement a strong inspections program. The goal of these inspections should be to find all weapons of mass destruction and disarm Iraq. I believe that the United Nations Security Council would support a strong inspections program that meets the goals articulated by the President.

I believe it is a mistake to demand that the Security Council authorize the use of force now, just as I believe the U.S. Congress should not authorize the use of force today. We should move forward as quickly as possible with unconditional inspections. Authorizing the use of force to enforce these inspections and disarm Iraq should come after our diplomatic efforts have been attempted and found to fail. They may fail. But they also may succeed. And they are more likely to if it is a united world against Saddam Hussein instead of the United States and Britain on our own.

Madam Speaker, issues of war and peace are never easy. The decision we make will shape this century. I do not know what the future will bring. However, I firmly believe that we must pursue diplomacy and every other tool first. War with Iraq now is not the answer.